

July 15, 1977

Although nobody NMRed there isn't much press in this issue, but it should still be rather interesting and pretty big because I have a lot of other stuff. Almost all from the pen of Randolph Smyth, 249 First Ave., Ottawa, Ont. K1S 2G5 Canada. There are now two people signed up for the latest game, both from Ottawa, at the usual \$3. gamefee; if I have no more than four by this time next month I'll throw it back open to anyone that wants in since there's such a delay before I have to handle it anyhow. In the meantime everyone is being charged a sub of one-half cent per page plus postage, but that will be changing once I move. To where? Still dunno....

When my method of reproduction changes, your chances of getting back issues at reasonable prices drops to zero: I can still photocopy them as always, but likely on a commercial machine at commercial rates, which I'll surely pass on to you. Those interested in back issues should ask now, or forever hold your peace.

\$\$\$ Last issue for Adams, Gibson, Hymas, White, and Wileman without a cheque. Gibson and Hymas will be tossed out of their games unless they can maintain the sub; White and Wileman can arrange transfer of sub credit (but I have rights to EGB until about 1980 already!).

Da games:

1976-CD, Fall 1907 (again). The Russian A Vie retreats -Boh.

England (Denny Shortliffe): A Bel-Pic, A Ruh-Bur, F Den-Hel, F Ber-Kie, F Nth-Eng, F Cly-Lvp, A Lon H, A Hol-Bel.

France (Alan Turner): F Eng S F Naf-Mid, F Naf-Mid, F Mid-Bre, A Bur H, A Pie-Tyo, A Ven S A Pie-Tyo, A Vie S Turkish A Ser-Bud/a/, F Tyr-Wes.

Germany (Doug Hayward): A Mun-Tyo.

Russia (Elliott Bold): F Nat-Mid, F Swe H, A Nwy-StP, A Boh S A Bud-Vie, A Bud-Vie, A Gal S A Bud-Vie, F Sev-Rum, A Ukr S F Sev-Rum.

Turkey (Tom Kissner): F Gre-Ion, F Eas-Ion, F Adr S A Tri, A Tri S French A Vie, A Rum-Ukr/d/, A Ser-Bud, F Bla S A Arm-Sev, A Arm-Sev.

Everyone finally accepted the decision to replay, some more reluctantly than others, but I have no comments from anyone that seem worth repeating here. In fact I have the feeling that things would have gone even smoother if I hadn't spilled all the beans to the players, and just got a decision from John with less publicity; e.g. the "threat" to resign didn't go over well, although it had no bearing on the outcome. Live and learn...next time I'll hand down an edict from the clouds. Death to democracy!

The Turkish A Rum can retreat -Bul, Ser, or OTB; Autumn/Winter/(Spring?) is due August 5, 1977. Also, vote on a four way draw proposal EFRT, pliz.

Centers/Builds:

E: (8): Home, Den, Hol, Kie, Ber, Bel; -/-, even.

F: (9): Home, Spa, Por, Ven, Rom, Nap, Tun; 2a/-, build two.

R: (7): StP, Mos, War, Swe, Nwy, Rum, Vie; 1a, Rum/Sev, Bud, even.

T: (9): Home, Bul, Gre, Ser, Tri, Sev, Bud; Sev, Bud/Rum, build one.

G: (1): (Sorry, Doug, you must admit you're easy to miss) Mun; -/-, even.

No press this time, so we'll head directly into

Kraken's (Mini)Comments: Russia has recouped most of the disaster of an NMR, but even losing a single center seems to have swung the balance against the north. The battle will be much longer and more uncertain, but momentum is still with the south: if they can seize even one more center between them only a southern NMR could save the northern fortunes. Always assuming that the alliance system holds (a chancy proposition) and that the draw does not go through (again it's quite likely that it will, since all players seem to be showing signs of exhaustion or boredom). The edge is still with Turkey overall, but will the other players permit him to transform a good "taste" into anything significant?

The draw proposal has inhibited my analytical enthusiasm: I don't want to have wasted my time if it goes through!

Considering the chokes that have been (and still are...see below) a constant feature of '76-CZ, and the massive one that has recently "graced" '76-CD, I'm probably the last person that should be writing this next page. Nevertheless the mood has hit me and here goes. If you're not a GM, maybe these questions will give some idea of the problems that come up from time to time in the life of your average mentor. How would you do?

GM Quiz

(The first four examples are lifted shamelessly from Dolchstoß, the British "house zine" of the NGC. The rest are my own, most having come up at one time or another in the past 84 issues.)

1. Is F Bot S F Bar-StP(nc) legal? Why (not)?
(This is the only one to be specifically covered in the 1971 Rulebook; but do you see the other side's point of view, and can you provide a rationale for your answer?)
2. a) England: A Mar-Tus, F Lyo C A Mar-Tus, F Pie S A Mar-Tus, F Mid-Wes, F Spa (sc) S F Lyo.
Italy: F Tyr-Lyo, F Tus S F Tyr-Lyo, F Wes S F Tyr-Lyo.
What happens in Tus/Lyo?
b) Remove the English F Spa(sc) from the problem---now what?
3. England: A Bel-Hol, F Eng C French A Bre-Bel.
France: A Bre-Bel
Germany: A Hol S French A Bre-Bel
What happens in Bel?
4. One player sends another a suggested set of mutual orders in the course of a negotiation, ends the letter, and signs at the bottom. The second player puts the deadline date at the head of the page and sends it in together with his own orders which stab the first player. What do you think of that one!?
5. A set of orders have no unit designations (i.e. Mar-Bur, Spa(sc)-Lyo).
There can be no ambiguity since previous seasons will show the nature of the units in the spaces, even when they're moving along the coastlines. However, the orders are technically incomplete. Will you decipher them if necessary and allow them?
6. An order to (a) support or (b) convoy a foreign unit lacks mention of the unit's nationality. Valid?
7. France: A Gas-Bre, A Pic-Bre.
England: F Mid S French A Pic-Bre, A Bel-Pic
a) Who goes where? (if anyone moves at all)
b) If you said that the English support and move work, suppose you have a specific note attached to the French orders, rejecting such support if it is given. Still OK?
8. England, allied with France, is in a tactical struggle against Italy that lands him in Spa (France's center) in a Fall season. He'd rather leave the center in French hands, though; is "friendly occupation" legal?
9. Here's one for Dave Truman: A California player complains that the three-week deadlines in your Ontario zine are too short (he's right, if the vice versa situation is any indication). Can you accomodate him?
10. ...and one for the '76-CD players: A letter arrives on the day of the deadline from a player wondering where the last issue went. No current moves, of course: is the game delayed or does the player NMR?
11. If an unordered unit is dislodged, may it retreat? If your answer is "no", would you feel the same way if the GM forgot to list the unit in the previous season's adjudication?
12. France orders "A Mar-B" The 1971 Rulebook does not lay down abbreviations, but only suggests the first three letters as convenient and unambiguous in most cases. Since only one space adjacent to Mar begins with B, the order is technically unambiguous if you accept the idea of abbreviations at all. Will you allow A Mar-Bur?

13. How about codewords?

(For the ignorant: Player A submits orders stating: "If B includes the codeword STABINBACK with his orders, order..., otherwise order...." This tool may be used when A cannot decide between two options as the deadline approaches, and leaves it up to his ally B to make the decision and either submit the codeword or not. Presumably B's units will move in concert with A's for maximum effect, but there's nothing to stop B from choosing the orders for A which give him the best result from a simultaneous stab!)

14. One player puppets to another, or is incommunicado for a season. Will you accept his orders as a blank cheque from his ally (his signature at the bottom of a blank page, filled in by the second player)?

15. A player NMRs every other season: how long will you let it go on?

16. a) One player NMRs and you call a standby. Before the next deadline you get a letter from another player threatening to resign if the standby gets the position. Sure enough the first player NMRs again while the standby submits. What to do?

b) Suppose all the original players make the same threat. Same decision?

17. You misfile a set of orders and NMR a player. He questions the miss, but you reply in good faith that nothing was received. Several weeks later the orders turn up. How do you resolve this after (a) no (b) one (c) two or more further seasons have been played? (This is my personal nightmare which runs past me with every player NMR, but the problem has never actually come up.)

18. A novice requests you to correct any illegal orders if the intention is clear, until he gets experience at writing his moves. Possible?

19. a) One of your players, with a good deal more playing and GMing experience than you (and whom you honestly respect) criticizes your GMing decision in a hazy area. What's your reaction?

b) Appealing your decision to an Ombudsman or similar official brings down a ruling against you. Reaction?

20. One of your players is also a fellow player in another zine, and offers to vote to end the game you're GMing if you'll do him a favour as a player (and to stonewall an obvious finish if you refuse). Anything unethical about going along? If so, what do you do about it?

Twenty's enough, eh? I'd like as much feedback as possible on these; but if you think they're easy, you haven't thought about 'em enough. Feel free to answer some, Len: wouldn't want you losing any sleep....

1976-CZ, Spring 1905: Russians, Italians squeeze the opposition!

England (George Parkanyi): F Ska-Swe, F Nwy S F Ska-Swe, A Fin-StP, F Mid-Wes, F Naf S F Mid-Wes.

France (Jim Whyte): A Gas-Mar, A Bur S A Gas-Mar, F Spa(sc) S A Gas-Mar, A Par-Gas

Germany (Alan Turner): F Den-Bal/d/, A Kie S A Ber, A Mun S A Ber/a/, A Ruh S A Kie.

Italy (Doug Hayward): F Wes-Spa(sc)/d/, F Mar S F Wes-Spa(sc), A Pie S F Mar, F Rom-Tyr, F Ion-Tun, F Aeg-Ion, A Ser H, A Boh-Mun, A Tyo S A Boh-Mun.

Russia (Harry Drews): F Swe-Den, F Bal S F Swe-Den, A Con-Sev, F Bla C A Con-Sev, A StP-Fin, A Pru S A Ber, A Mos-StP, A War-Lva, A Rum H, A Smy H, A Sil S Italian A Boh-Mun, A Ber S Italian A Boh-Mun.

Note, Alan and others, that Russia dislodged Germany from Ber last Fall; Russia's in Ber and Germany's in Kie. Harry, you should make another space on your order form: "GM error: _____" Please, no more! I've rechecked this adjudication...enough! There can't be any mistakes (sob...).

German F Den may retreat -Ska, Nth, Hel, or OTB; Italian F Wes can go to Lyo or OTB. Summer/Fall 1905 is due August 5, 1977.

And there's no press for this game, either! Just recently I was reading somewhere about the great press in FSF...I think they put a hex on us.

Might as well break up the game reports good and proper with a review:

Several months ago I received a flyer for a new one-shot publication, Introduction to the Strategy and Tactics of Postal Diplomacy, being put out by the Institute for Diplomatic Studies (Box 8416, San Diego, Ca. 92102, USA). As it appeared to be a cut above the annual IDA Handbooks (which were quite good, but are they still being produced? I haven't seen much action from the IDA (or whatever) since the Constitution was changed) I sent away \$16. for the complete package. The enterprise was highly touted in the Spring issue of Diplomacy World, and it was only afterwards that I saw some critical comments in Runestone and elsewhere concerning the reliability of Lawrence Peery, the man behind the whole thing, who had apparently dropped out of the hobby about five years ago under a cloud (read: with a lot of people's money).

I have no personal information about the original charges, but after having my doubts for awhile, I did receive the ordered material about a month ago. Mr. Peery gives an explanation for his (temporary?) absence from the hobby in a short preface. Physically, the product is close to 400 pages of mimeo (perfectly legible and professional looking) divided into eight sections and bound in an attractive black soft-cover.

I find it a bit tough to review the contents. While I've had a chance to go through the whole thing, I caught myself skimming over much of it because the material was so elementary. As the author himself indicates, by the title and elsewhere, it's an introduction, designed primarily for the novice player. Furthermore, as he also admits, there's a good deal of repetition, both for emphasis and to make references easier within each section.

The last, and most serious, criticism is that while strategical alternatives from a given point are fairly detailed, the "best" course is usually arrived at from theory alone, and the illustrations proceed to the next stage of the game on the assumption that this strategy has been adopted and has succeeded. Clearly even 400 pages will not suffice to list all possibilities comprehensively, though, so it is hard to say whether a different approach would be better. The main beef is that the recommendations are occasionally restrictive and a novice could be left at sea if they aren't practical in his game.

While I can't recommend the work as serious reading for anyone with two years' experience in the hobby (or, say, exposure to eight games at various stages), I still find it interesting from a historical viewpoint. For instance, it's easy to see why Italy used to do so poorly in the old days: France is recommended to attack him from the start, whereas initial Franco-Italian neutrality is the rule in modern games. Alliance with Italy isn't even mentioned as an Austrian option, and again a quick attack is recommended. Similarly, the Lepanto (Italian attack on Turkey) is described as "probably a bit advanced for the novice player"---with France and Austria usually less hostile, the Lepanto appears to be the opening of choice these days for Italies of all strengths. Readers with up-to-date experience can discover equally amusing anachronisms.

The novice must beware of being rigidly channelled by some of the suggestions; but taken with a grain of salt I think the S&TPD can be a good



description of one way to play the game---a way that could perhaps be resurrected to advantage these days. Certainly the basic principles of the game haven't changed, and reading this with a bit of thought can save the inexperienced player a lot of grief over the board. While stabs and other fireworks are, to my mind, inadequately covered from the "positive" side, a more conservative player will appreciate the discussions of demilitarized zones and how to use neutrality pacts to guard against sudden stabs.

The illustrative games are all "success stories", and rather dull ones at that, since it's the lowest common denominator that's being illustrated. Still, it can help give a feel for the mechanics of the orders and the goals of the endgame; and if you don't appear to be facing any strong players, these cut-and-dried ideas are unquestionably good. They suffer primarily from ease of anticipation: if you follow the book and get frustrated tactically, change your policy if possible and tread softly!

Overall, it's interesting to some degree to experienced players and may be useful to novices. \$16. seems a bit steep, though...anyone that wants a look at it can borrow mine, provided that you pay postage costs both ways, don't vomit on it, and return it in a reasonable time.

1977-AA, Spring 1904: Nobody set to take over as the slashing continues...

Austria (George Parkanyi): A Gal-Bud, A Tri S A Gal-Bud, F Alb-Gre.

England (Cal White): F Swe-Bal, A Den-Kie, F StP(nd) spits rocks at Moscow,

F Nwy-Nwg, F Edi-Nth, A Lon-Yor, A Lpl-Edi.

France (Cecil Nurse): A Bur-Mun, A Boh S A Bur-Mun, A Bel-Ruh/d/, A Mar-Bur,

A Spa-Gas, F Tun H, F Bre-Mid.

Germany (Doug Hayward): F Hol-Bel, A Ruh S F Hol-Bel, A Mun-Bur/d/, A Kie-Mun.

Italy (Brad Warner): A Ven-Rom, F Tyr S A Ven-Rom.

Russia (Gary Mills): A War-Sil, A Ukr-Gal, A Mos-Sev.

Turkey (Ed Innes): A Rum-Gal, A Con-Rum, A Ser S A Con-Rum, A Sev S A Con-Rum,

F Bla C A Con-Rum, F Smy-Eas, F Aeg-Gre, F Nap-Ion.

The French A Bel has a retreat -Pic or OTB; the German A Mun -Tyo, Ber, or OTB. Summer/Fall 1904 is due August 5, 1977.

DINGDINGDING would you believe...press??

Vienna:

OFFICIAL DIPLOMATIC NOTE TO TURKEY - You realize, of course, that we are going to have to kick the crap out of you for this. Surrender now or suffer the consequences!

UNOFFICIAL DIPLOMATIC NOTE TO TURKEY - Dear Garbage-face, you are ugly and your mother dresses you funny...

SIX O'CLOCK NEWS: Today the Austrian High Command included THEIR laundry with that of the Austrian Third Army, since when they heard of the dirty, rotten, evil, filthy, diabolical, downright mean stab by the Turks, they all collectively peed their pants.

Austria is commencing the counter-attack by first of all air-dropping all that dirty laundry on Ankara and Constantinople, and secondly giving the Turks that noisy, miserable, bastard little place of Bosnia and the other place. If that doesn't demoralize them, nothing will!

Paris: The French government issues a communique today congratulating the English on their 3 builds, the Turkish on their two builds, the Austrians on their NMR, the Germans, Italians, and Russians on their removals, and most of all, themselves for getting another build under terrible conditions.

They hope that with the elections coming up in late summer, this will be taken into consideration and that most of them will be reelected.

Kraken: Does that press belong here? Must be a new series....

How does this zine come off with six pages without even including the four-week deadline games? Looks like I'm switching to ditto just in time!



A few quick plugs for new zines:
Diplomacy Digest (Mark L. Berch, 492 Naylor Place, Alexandria, Va. 22304 USA) has no games, and no openings. It's dedicated to the reprinting of the best articles from days of yore (when men were men, etc.) on Diplomacy. Mark has answered most of my initial queries about the zine, and I can now recommend it highly. The first issue was a mixture of humour, good play tips, etc.: worth 30¢ per issue if the quality can be maintained.
Cum Grano Salis (George Parkanyi, 158B MacArthur Rd., #1608, Vanier, Ont.) All my readers have exposure to the guy that's bugging up '77-AE in these pages: now he's charged off on his own (at last)

and the results as seen in CGS #1 are satisfactory. Of course, the talents of three co-editors including Mike Dominsky may have something to do with that. In any event, I am presently mustering support from ODD to submarine this zine, because if it gets any better I may lose subscribers to it. Can't have that! Again, highly recommended. Two top zines arriving within three weeks...whew!

I promised to explain last issue's rating formula in more detail. Good excuse to fill half a page here, and maybe half a page next time.

Points to note: A high level of participation, past and present, leads to a better rating, all other things being equal. Results are additive like the Calhamer points, so a poor result doesn't hurt: there's an incentive to play out the position rather than resigning, since even seventh place is better than nothing at all. Dropouts receive no credit for their game, while standbys are rewarded according to the relative time they held the position. Furthermore, players who dropped out of the hobby years ago will be subject to an attrition factor and will not be able to retain an initially high rating. This is to encourage the continued participation of top players, to eliminate meaningless names of departed players from the top boards, and in recognition that the hobby changes with time (see my review of S&TPD above; and even the rules, eg. for convoys, are still being redefined!). However, someone who returns to active play after a lapse retains his "track record" and can regain his old rating level after completing several new games.

Winning games gives a lot of cumulative weight to your rating. Thus the hobby leaders with 15 or so wins to their credit will quadruple their raw score without this factor. At the same time, there is some emphasis on other "quality" finishes apart from draws (second place is marginally better than a 5-way draw, but a bit worse than a 4-way with this formula, which I think is an accurate reflection of current opinion). This avoids the greatest criticisms of the Calhamer system, devised in the days when winning was all: in these more relaxed days of draws and placings, more relative credit is given to such results. To some extent a rating system should mirror the current ideals.

Like the Calhamer formula, this one fails to correct for "abuses" by Joe Sweat who enters 100 games and gets ten wins: his rating will probably be superior to Whiz Kid who enters nine and wins 'em all. But I'm out of space: I'll deal with that next week...

Randolph